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Mid-Hudson Valley Small Business Reaches for the Sky With a Little Help from the SBA

Port Jervis, NY-- HGI Skydyne, a small business in the Mid-Hudson Valley, has produced products that have not only reached the stratosphere—literally, but have even made their way to the moon and back.

The company's history dates back to 1938 when it began manufacturing and selling lightweight, protective cases. Over the years it became a regular supplier of state-of-the-art fiberglass and composite-material cases that became popular with the military and in the aerospace and electronics industries.

Among the company's many achievements were a patented composite-material wing for the Corsair airplane, the design and production of the transportation container for NASA's Lunar Landing Module, and the design and manufacture of the cases that brought moon rocks home to earth. Despite those successes, Skydyne's owners were ready to shutter the company's doors in 2002 and consequently contribute to the area's unemployment rate.

Enter Hornet Group, Inc., a small, six-employee product development company that decided to acquire Skydyne. The acquisition of Skydyne was made possible by the U.S. Small Business Administration's 7(a) Loan Program, whereby the SBA guaranteed a loan from Key Bank to Hornet Group, Inc. The loan not only enabled Hornet Group to keep Skydyne afloat, but it also enabled Hornet Group to hire additional employees—now numbering 80. Under the new management the company has more recently manufactured a case that will protect its delicate electronic contents in a 400-foot drop for the federal Bureau of Land Management, and the only United Nations-approved case for international shipping of level-4 blood; blood that is contaminated by such things as the e. coli virus.

The company continues to grow under the management of Jay Benson, Chairman and CEO. A decorated Vietnam Veteran, including the award of the Purple Heart for injuries sustained in combat, Benson surrounds himself with stockholders and board members who are also veterans. Under their collective stewardship, a second round of SBA and Key Bank financing was recently completed in order to accommodate the company's astronomical growth--- sales orders that have grown to \$3 million from \$200,000 in just two years.

Benson and his team at HGI Skydyne are all about giving back to the community. Among other charitable associations, they contribute to the local D.A.R.E. Program and regularly sponsor Pop Warner Football, Little League Baseball, Girl's Softball and the PBA's Soap Box Derby. The company has also provided a protective container to the Lions Club, allowing the Club to transport a \$70,000 vision-diagnostic machine around the state to provide free eye exams. So even if one of its products hasn't gone to the moon lately, by providing employment, generating tax revenue, and involving itself deeply in the community, HGI Skydyne has truly reached the sky once again.

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